



---

# **iChoose XLR8**

## **Module 2**

# Lesson 4: Priorities



*“Decide what your priorities are.  
If you don’t, someone else will.”*

**JOHN C. MAXWELL**



**AT THE END OF THE INITIATIVE LESSON, YOU WROTE AN ACTION STEP TO IMPROVE YOUR SELF-RATING.**

Did you complete the action?  Yes  No Describe the results. ....

**LEGEND:**

Use the prompts throughout the lesson to guide you.



First person  
read aloud.



Next person  
read aloud.



Underline what's  
important to you.



Share with  
others.



Take  
action.

**HOW YOU CAN MAKE THIS LESSON EFFECTIVE FOR YOU AND OTHERS:**

1. Form groups of 3-5 for a 30-45-minute time slot and 6-8 for an hour.
2. Respect and value each person in the group.  
Encourage yourself and others as you share.
3. Take turns reading each section of the material out loud.  
You may request to pass to the next reader.
4. Discuss openly. As you read, underline what is important to you.
5. Evaluate yourself. Review. Reflect. Apply. Have fun!



**THE GOAL OF THIS LESSON:**

**Choose to prioritize your life for successful living.**



## 01

# Priorities are a Choice



You were born with the potential for greatness. You get to choose which path you will take, how high to set the bar for yourself, and how hard you are willing to work to clear that bar. You get to decide how to spend your time, who to spend it with, and what you will give up when time runs short. Every priority you make and every action you take has consequence, but whom better to decide what is best for you than you? It is your life to live. Own it!



### THE ROCK STORY

A teacher stood before her class. She picked up a large clear jar and placed it on a table. After filling it with rocks, she asked her class, “Is it full?” They agreed that it was.

The teacher then picked up a box of small pebbles and poured them into the jar. She shook the jar lightly. The pebbles rolled into the open areas between the rocks. “Is it full now?” They agreed that it was.

The teacher then poured a box of sand into the jar. Of course the sand filled up the entire jar. She then asked once more if the jar was full. The students said yes.

The teacher said, “I want you to recognize that this jar represents your life. The rocks are the most important things — your family, your health, your friends, and your dreams... things that if everything else was lost and only they remained, your life would still be full.

“The pebbles,” she continued, “are the other things that matter. Things that are necessary for your daily life. The sand is everything else — the small stuff.”

If you put the sand into the jar first, there is no room for the pebbles or the rocks. The same goes for your life. If you spend all your time and energy on the small stuff, you will never have room for the things that are important to you. Pay attention to the things that are critical to your happiness and success.



Take care of the rocks first — the things that really matter. Set your priorities. The rest is just sand.

**REFLECTION:**

The Rocks = The Most Important Stuff

The Pebbles = Necessary Stuff

The Sand = Small Stuff

What is one rock in my life? .....



What is one pebble in my life? .....



What is one piece of sand in my life? .....





## 02

# How to Pick Your Priorities



What are the rocks in your life? What priorities need the most time and effort from you? You can choose what rocks should be put in “your jar” by asking and answering three questions.

### 1. ROCK QUESTION: “WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO?”

These are things you are required to do. They are not options. They are necessary.

Rock Answer: “This is one thing I HAVE to do.”



### 2. ROCK QUESTION: “WHAT DO I DO WELL?”

These are things based upon your abilities, your strengths, and your giftedness. You will experience success if you give them time and effort.

Rock Answer: “This is one thing I do WELL.”

### 3. ROCK QUESTION: “WHAT DO I LOVE TO DO?”

These are the things you dream about. You are passionate about them. You will be fulfilled when you do these things.

Rock Answer: “This is one thing I DREAM about.”

A glass jar with a metal clasp is shown, partially filled with smooth, multi-colored stones. The stones are in various shades of grey, black, brown, and tan. The jar is positioned in the upper half of the frame, and the stones are in the lower half. The background is a plain, light color.

**Today I will put the rocks in my  
life into the jar first.**



## 03

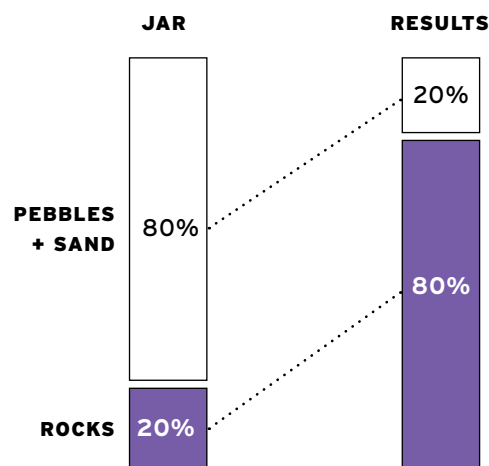
# How Prioritizing Affects Me



When you focus your attention and give your time to the most important priorities, the rocks, you will receive the highest return for your effort.

Look at the diagram. The left column represents your jar; the right column represents the results based on your priorities. The bottom 20% is composed of the rocks you choose to put into your jar. If you do that, you will receive 80% of everything you need in life.

The top 80% is composed of the pebbles and sand you choose to put into your jar. This example is describing how the 80/20 Principle works. We will explore this principle more in the next section.



### REFLECTION:

Discuss the diagram: As you look at it, what does it teach you?



## 04

# Lessons Learned from the 80/20 Principle



### *1. Activity does not equal accomplishment.*

Working hard is important. Working smart is more important. How do you work smart? By doing the important things first, the “rocks.” Eliminate the “sand” and some of the “pebbles.” Write down your “Not To Do” list before preparing your “To Do” list. Your goal is not to be busy; it is to be effective. Stop spending time on minor things, and start giving major time to the important things.



### *2. Evaluate and change or remain the same.*

Constantly evaluate your priorities. Why? Priorities change. Ask yourself, “Would I have started this project or relationship if I could do it over again, knowing what I know now?” If the answer is “No,” then remove it from your priority list. You don’t always have to finish what you start.



*Don't spend too much time  
climbing the ladder only to  
realize when you reach the top  
that the ladder was leaning  
against the wrong building.*<sup>12</sup>

### *3. Act or react.*

Control your day or your day will control you. Whenever you feel the tendency toward laziness taking over and you remember something you should be doing, stop and say out loud, “Do it now! Do it now! Do it now!” A sculptor doesn’t look at a piece of marble waiting for the unneeded pieces to fall off. Grab a chisel and get busy!



---

<sup>12</sup>Seamands, David A. *Living with your Dreams*. Victor Books, 1990.

**REFLECTION:**

Look at the three lessons on priorities. Which lesson do you need to learn the most?



**HOW MY PRIORITIZING AFFECTS OTHERS**

When you choose to prioritize your life correctly, you place yourself in a position to prioritize your life for others.

**“NO FOR NOW” DOESN’T MEAN “NO” LATER.**

You should be willing to say “No for now.” Why? Saying “no for now” creates space to say “yes” when the time is right.

The natural tendency of others is to place their priorities over your priorities. Knowing this, you can be both an example and helpful to them by explaining, “My ‘No’ to you now will allow me to be present and helpful for you later.”



For example, If you have a major math test in the morning but your friend needs to talk to you about an argument with another friend, you would be wise to suggest to him that you will talk about it tomorrow after your test. Otherwise, you would be distracted, unhelpful, and unable to give him the attention he deserves.

The result? A win for both of you!

Your prioritized life allows you something rare and genuine to offer — the best and fullest version of yourself — helpful and present.

---

**Today I will apply the 80/20 principle to my life,  
and by doing so, prioritize my life for others.**

---

*“Decide what your priorities are.  
If you don’t, someone else will.”*

**JOHN C. MAXWELL**

**EVALUATE YOURSELF ON HOW WELL YOU DEMONSTRATE MANAGING PRIORITIES ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 5:** Select your answer. (1 is weak, 5 is strong)

1

2

3

4

5

Why did you give yourself this rating? .....



**ACTION STEP:**

What specific action can you take immediately that will improve your rating? .....





The Maxwell Leadership Foundation, founded by bestselling author, coach, and speaker John C. Maxwell, develops leaders by helping them experience the transformational impact of values-based, people-centric leadership development. Developing leaders are challenged to apply what they are learning and take action to make the world better and brighter. As individuals are impacted there is a ripple effect and families, schools, organizations and communities experience lasting positive change.

For more information, visit [MaxwellLeadership.org](http://MaxwellLeadership.org).